

in which R is as defined above, wherein:

- (a) the reaction is carried out in a closed reactor, which comprises 5-60% of the amount by weight of the DAMEA necessary for the reaction and which has been pressurized by air or depleted air to 0.5 to 3 bar, by continuously introducing, at a temperature of 35 to 65°C, the quaternizing agent (II) and the water and finally the remaining DAMEA, until the desired concentration of salt (I) in the water is obtained,
 - the start of the introduction of the water beginning when 0-30% of the amount by weight of the quaternizing agent (II) necessary for the reaction has been added;
 - the start of the introduction of the remaining DAMEA beginning when 20-80% of the amount by weight of the quaternizing agent (II) necessary for the reaction has been added; and
 - it being possible for the pressure at the end of the reaction to reach 9 bar; then
- (b) the reactor is depressurized while keeping the oxygen content constant by simultaneous introduction of air end, after returning to atmospheric pressure, the residual quaternizing agent is removed.

2. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out at a temperature of 40 to 60°C.

3. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out with a pressure which, at the end of the reaction, reaches 4 to 7 bar.

4. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the introduction of the water is started when 10-20% of the amount by weight of the quaternizing agent (II) necessary for the reaction has been added.

5. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the introduction of the remaining DAMEA is started when 30-70% of the amount by weight of the quaternizing agent (II) necessary for the reaction has been added.

6. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the quaternizing agent is introduced over a period of time of 1-7 hours, the water over a period of time of 1-8 hours and the remaining DAMEA over a period of time of 2-8 hours.

7. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out with a molar ratio of the quaternizing agent to the DAMEA of 1 to 1.1.

8. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out with a mean ratio of water/quaternizing agent throughput of 0.2-1.5; a mean ratio of remaining DAMEA/quaternizing agent throughput of 2.5-5; and a mean ratio of water/remaining DAMEA throughput of 0.2-1.2.

9. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, resulting in an aqueous solution having a concentration of quaternary salt (I) of 50 to 85% by weight.

10. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, carried out in the presence of at least one stabilizer which is 3,5-di(tert-butyl)-4-hydroxytoluene, hydroquinone methyl ether, hydroquinone, catechol, tert-butylcatechol, phenothiazine or mixtures of these stabilizers, the content of stabilizing agent(s) being 20 to 2000 ppm, with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I).

11. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 10, carried out in the presence in addition of at least one sequestering agent for metals which is diethylene-triaminepentaacetic acid, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, N-(hydroxyethyl)-ethylenediaminetriacetic acid or the trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid, the content of sequestering agent(s) being 1 to 100 ppm, with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I).

12. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the residual quaternizing agent is removed by stripping with air.

Please add the following new claims 13-15.

--13. The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out with a molar ratio of the quaternizing agent to the DAMEA of 1 to 1.05.

14. The process as claimed in claim 1, carried out in the presence of at least one stabilizer which is 3,5-di(tert-butyl)-4-hydroxytoluene, hydroquinone methyl ether, hydroquinone, catechol, tert-butylcatechol, phenothiazine or mixtures of these stabilizers, the content of stabilizing agent(s) being 100 to 1200 ppm, with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I).

15. The process as claimed in claim 10, carried out in the presence in addition of at least one sequestering agent for metals which is diethylene-triaminepentaacetic acid, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, N-(hydroxyethyl)-ethylenediaminetriacetic acid or the trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid, the content of sequestering agent(s) being 5 to 30 ppm, with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I). --